From Texts to Books. The Circulation of the Written World in Ancient Greece

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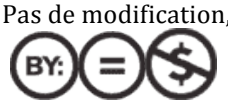

My paper will not be a case study on a precise corpus, but a broader reflection on the circulation of written texts in the ancient Greek world, from the Vth century BC to the IId century AD.

Modern and contemporary Classicists have no doubts about it: we inherited from Antiquity a library of written texts. These texts were transmitted through material books and went through several steps of transformation: changes of material medium (papyrus book-roll, codex, computer hard-drive, CD-Rom), changes in the techniques of reproduction (handwriting, printing-press, digital technology), changes in the writing conventions (from uncial to minuscule letters, from *scriptio continua* to punctuated sentences), changes in the language itself (Greek and Latin translated into modern vernacular languages). During this transmission process, twenty-seven centuries long for the oldest extant Greek texts, scribes, copyists, editors, philologists, printers, anonymous readers contributed to save and to reproduce these texts, to correct mistakes and add new ones, to fill the gaps and sometimes create new ones. They worked hard in order to make the literality of the texts fit with their intended meanings, or to make fit the supposed meanings of the texts with their literality.

As a result, a Classical scholar, at the beginning of the XXIst century, is working on, with and within a library: under the labels of Loeb or Teubner, Budé or Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, Brill, Oxford or Cambridge, printed books from the major academic presses fill our studies shelves. Since the nineties of the last century, a CD-Rom, the TLG, and an online-database, became the virtual substitutes to these material libraries: digital texts now provide their readers with the feeling, real and illusory at the same time, to grasp, as a whole, all that ever was committed to writing in Antiquity, from Homeric epic to Byzantine texts, or more precisely, all that was not lost, from the masterpieces of literature to the tiniest fragments of scholarship.

Mediaeval manuscripts, printed editions, from the Renaissance *incunabula* to the « Classiques en poche » at Les Belles Lettres, and nowadays digital databases impose a specific position upon the Classical scholar: he is a reader of written texts. His reading could be intensive or extensive; it could follow hermeneutical guidelines and try to enter the inner, deeper levels of a text's meaning, or survey, on a broader scale, semantic and thematic fields. This scholar could focus his reading on a single text, sometimes just a part of a text, or zoom to a larger unit, such as all the written texts of a given period or of a given author, all the written texts in a given genre, or just all the texts written in the whole Greek tradition: he has an instant (?) access to a whole corpus which nobody, in the Ancient world, ever accessed as such. These various focuses define different scholarly strategies that all of us and of our students are used to following according to our research or teaching activities. We may use different tools, different grids, such as structuralism, anthropology, structural semantics, linguistic of enunciation, various standpoints in the field of semiotics and poetics, psychoanalysis, etc. We may be interested in words or in facts, in the explicit or in the implicit, in the singularity of a text or in what roots it in a genre, in a language, in a culture. We may be positivists, and believe what the texts say, or practice a critical doubt, and go beyond the surface to dig, to uncover what was thought, but not said.

Whatever the standpoint we choose, we share a basic assumption: either handwritten, or printed, or digital, the Greek texts we read today form a coherent universe, reflecting the thought and the intent of their authors and, beyond them, what these authors shared, either in the synchrony or in the diachrony of the cultural tradition they belong to.

The reading of Greek texts relies today on dictionaries, on indexes and thesauri, on commentaries. Scholarly readers are able to grasp Greek words as a web of meanings and connotations, documented by all their occurrences in the extant literature, they are able to follow the influence of words, ideas and themes along ancient Greek culture, through the plays of imitation and memory. Contemporary readers can go forwards and backwards in the text, they can write marks in the margins, they can put a bookmark between two pages. They can navigate through the text thanks to its page numbering, to the layout of the text and the division of books and paragraphs, the numbering of pages of authoritative editions (Casaubon's divisions still rule over our editions of Strabo and Athenaeus), sometimes the numbering of lines or verses. These contemporary scholars may work in Harvard or Göttingen, in Jerusalem or in Paris. They use the same editions and they quote the same texts. Giving a reference to an ancient text sometimes even makes unnecessary the quotation. Quotations are to be ruled by literality. They should be faithful. One can check them and pinpoint the inaccuracies. This is the pervert game played by most PhD examiners.

My opening remarks are indeed trivial. Should I even make such a point? We do not read in the same way, we do not read the same texts, we do not read through the same medium as ancient Greeks did.

A first standpoint is to assume that anachronism, appropriation and reappropriation are inherent to the act of reading, and that meaning and interpretation change according to individual readers and to the communities they belong to. Reading as a creative process expands the power of texts, through the unfolding of new meanings, of new links with the culture and the traditions surrounding them. Each scholarly milieu defines its own criteria of relevance, its own margin of freedom, its own boldness while facing the borders of traditions and the horizon where a text's meaning just vanishes into relativity.

A second standpoint, at the opposite of the previous one, is: in order to read Greek texts, we should understand the way they were written, used and read in the ancient Greek world. Such a methodological position could be defined as an attempt towards an archaeology of the written word in the Ancient world. Archaeology should be understood

first in its material meaning. The Greek biblion was a volumen, but other media were also used, such as pinakes or handheld tablets, deltoi. These media implied specific positions of the writer's and reader's bodies, of their hands, of their face, of their gaze. The handling of a papyrus book-roll was a very different physical experience than the browsing of a codex, either manuscript or printed. The medium, as it is well known too, determined the page layout, the length of written texts, and their divisions into several book-rolls. On the other hand, this archaeology has also a conceptual dimension: why, when and how did ancient Greeks start to encode and to share knowledge through their writing technology and a material and external support? What was the authority of a written text? How did it relate to its writer? Was the written text a substitute of the author or had it an objective status? Did it replace oral discourse? Or did it add another dimension to oral discourse? And how did these texts become books?

Such questions are central in recent trends of classical scholarship, focusing on the development of literacy or on the shift from oral literature to written literature in the ancient world. I would like to discuss these questions in a narrower perspective: I will consider the use of writing as a way to fix and to convey thought and knowledge. I will make three main points:

1. **Basic assumptions about committing thought to writing**
2. **A written text is not necessarily a book**
3. **The role of librarian scholarship in the objectivation of books**

1. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT COMMITTING THOUGHT TO WRITING

The emergence and the development of writing in ancient societies are a complex process and do not follow a unique genetic pattern. Many variables are to be considered, such as the writing system itself, the conception of written signs and of their origin (is writing a divine or a human technology?), the diffusion of literacy and the interaction of writers and readers. The status itself of the texts to be written is indeed an important factor: a revealed text, the transcription of God's words, the laws a human community

imposes upon itself, the proceedings of oracular consultations or of divination sessions, poetry, lists and catalogues of words or of material goods, define as many different uses of writing, invested with different levels of authority.

All of them, however, share a basic assumption: a written text is not a written speech. It is something else, something more. Writing adds to oral discourses new meanings and a new form. It makes them available for new purposes. It changes their scale, their place in space and in time. Let's just stress a particular feature: writing is a tool of objectivation. Even if a written text is not intended for circulation, it implies an objectivation, a materialization of discourse, from the oral utterance, hic et nunc, to its fixation upon an external support. Even if writing is processed by a specialized technician – a copyist or a scribe, the written text is not the equivalent of the dictated text or the flow of words and thoughts crossing an « author's mind », while he dictates a text aloud or writes it himself.

Writing a scholarly text or writing knowledge imply three main consequences:

a) A specific status of the writer
b) A specific conception of the written language
c) A specific pragmatic of the text itself.

a) A specific status of the writer

Any history of the use of writing and of written literature has to address the question of the writers' status. I do not mean only their social and professional status, but also the specific status linked with authorship, or rather with the many ways someone could claim a written text as his own.

A text's author is not necessarily its writer. And one or several scribes may have reproduced any previous text in many copies: copying these texts is not the same as writing them. In ancient Mesopotamia, according to Jean-Jacques Glassner, the key-figure is the scribe, not the author. Clay-tablets' libraries rely on the expertise of scribes, who are at the same time scholars, priests and seers. The key words are transmission,

reproduction and compilation, not creation or authorship. Being a specialist of letters and of writing is mainly transmitting texts, not writing new ones.

In ancient Greece, scribes played a crucial function in archaic cities: as specialists of the so-called "Phoenician letters" they were hired with many privileges by cities willing to publicize their laws. Scribes were necessary to the life of civic communities, and they provided the cities hiring them with an external memory of all their decisions, of their rules, of their religious calendar. The contract between a Cretan city and the scribe Spensithios is the most famous example of such a legal agreement with a technician of writing. On the other hand, we have very few testimonies about the scribes who produced in Antiquity the copies of the extant Greek literature. When authors speak about their work, they very seldom characterize themselves as writing down a text.

Let us remind that writing on a papyrus book-roll was not considered as a task worth of free and honorable men. Greeks were accustomed to the use of tables and chairs, as one can see from painted vases or stone carvings. But they did not use them for writing on papyrus book-rolls; they used them for various other activities, commercial (banking) and technical, but not for scholarly work. Writing on a papyrus book-roll meant sitting on the ground, in the position of Egyptian scribes, or with a knee up, using the upper part of the tight as a plane support for the papyrus. Such a position was a slave's position. When Greek authors stage themselves as committed to the act of writing, they are using *deltoi*, tablets, and are sitting on a chair, such as, for example, Callimachus in the opening verses of the *Aitiai*. On classical vases painting, one can see men, women and children holding papyrus book-rolls, but they look as readers, not as writers. When characters are depicted as writing a text, they use tablets, not book-rolls: most of them seem to be schoolboys involved in school exercises. As far as I know, Attic vase-paintings do not show free men writing on a papyrus book-roll, sitting on the ground as scribes usually did.

As it is well known, at the beginnings of Greek lyrical and encomiastic poetry, poets put the emphasis on their status of *poietai*, not on that of writers or scribes. Their *poieîn* was described through various metaphors drawn from the world of craftsmanship and techniques. They defined themselves as craftsmen working on wood, metal, wool. Such a

self-representation implied a conception of the poem as a hand-made object, a conception of language as words chiseled by a craftsman. It did not allude to the act of writing itself.

We have to be aware of this fact: being a writer in ancient Greece did not necessarily mean one had to produce himself a material copy of the text, through handwriting. It was indeed a possibility, although not emphasized in Classical literature, but the verb *graphô* at the first person of singular means something else than the mere fact of inscribing letters on a papyrus book-roll or even on a tablet. It is a form of signature, a *sphragis* through which someone claims a text as his own work, as his own discourse, as an expression of his thought. But it constructs also a specific enunciative position, that of an individual, speaking for his own sake and using the technology of alphabetic writing in order to express his own views, as a private citizen, on the world or on the past and to make them public. The famous opening sentence of the *Genealogiai* of Hecataeus of Miletus: « Tade graphô… » does not define the position of a scribe writing down genealogical traditions on his book-roll, but a particular standpoint, where an individual defines his own position, his own personality, through a reflexive use of writing and a good laugh in front of the contradictory and confused traditions of the Greeks. This "I, Hecataeus" stands in front of these anonymous and collective sources, although epic poetry and hesiodic catalogues are probably the targets of Hecataeus.

b) A specific conception of the written language

The emergence of a written literature implies a specific conception of writing or, more precisely, of the written language. Writing is considered as an encoding device, which makes possible the fixation of discourse and its retrieval through reading. In the ancient Greek world, one could add that writing allows the encoding of the voice and that reading aloud a written text reactivates its author's voice. Jesper Svenbro analyzed a few years ago the subtle enunciative plays linked with the use of the first person of singular in tombstones' or borders tones inscriptions: the reader, while reading aloud the inscription, was lending his own voice to the text and to its enunciative actor.

Written language, however, differs to many respect from oral language. It is deprived from contextual information, which is linked with oral performance, such as melody, accent, gestures, rhythm. At a certain step of the transmission of ancient poetical texts, in IIIrd-century Alexandria, scholars devised a system of "meta-writing" signs, such as accents, prosody marks, punctuation marks, division of poetical texts into verses and stances, etc. This "meta-writing" level suggests that a part of the codes of oral recitation was then lost, and should be reconstructed or fixed through specific written marks. Gregory Nagy devoted a very suggestive study to the way Alexandrian scholars edited Bacchylides' oral poetry, and provided the text with all the signs necessary to its reading, once the codes of performance were lost. Until then, during the classical period, the written transcription of lyrical poetry was not intended to be read by silent readers, but was an aide-mémoire for singers and performers who mastered the codes of recitation.

Either written down by their author, or dictated to a scribe, texts were considered as an efficient medium for fixing knowledge, at an early stage of Greek culture. Pre-Socratic *phusiologoi* most likely delivered their teaching through oral lessons or lectures to their disciples. But they also used writing, either poetry or prose. Written texts made possible sophisticated operations, such as definitions, metaphors, accounts on the principles of the natural world, etc. These thinkers also used various graphic tools, such as geometrical drawings and even a map, according to the tradition on Anaximander. Writing was not conceived mainly as a way to share knowledge, but as a way to build it, through the objectivation of abstract concepts, through the use of abstract words, through a specific syntax. In the extant fragments of Thales, Anaximander, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Anaximenes, the conceptual content cannot be separated from linguistic experiments, such as the forging of abstract words through the use of a neutral adjective as a noun (e.g. *to apeiron* in Anaximander) or the use of metaphors, that made possible a link between empirical experience and the imagination of an invisible reality (e.g. Anaximander comparing the shape of the earth with a segment of column).

The same could be said about the early phases of Greek historiography, such as the works of Hecataeus and Herodotus, or those of the authors of *genealogiai* and of local histories. All these authors stand on strange positions, somewhere in between writing and orality. They still belong to a world of oral performances, since they recitate or read

aloud their texts to an audience of listeners, during Panhellenic festivals or in civic and private circles. They still use patterns of oral composition, such as catalogues, repetition and echoes of narrative themes, *logoi*, somewhere in between epics and folk-tales. But writing plays a crucial part in these compositions. One could think for example about the abstraction of the *Periegesis* by Hecataeus, who enumerates the places and the peoples of the *oikoumené* without linking them through a narrative of heroic wanderings. They are linked by the abstract logic of spatial relationships. There is a new rationality in such a description of space, an objective coherence linked with the use of spatial prepositions and adverbs (*epi, peri, apo, meta, pros, kathuperthen, huper, hupo*…), with the use of a consistent spatial orientation (sunrise, sunset, winds…). Thanks to the use of writing, this *Periegesis* builds an encompassing frame, a hierarchized catalogue, where single place names or tribe names were included into regional areas, then into countries and continents. The catalogue's subdivisions allowed scale changes without ever loosing the continuity of the circuit of the world, of the *periodos gês*. In the same way, Herodotus' *Historiai* display complex intellectual operations, such as comparison, syllogism, mental construction of space and description of bidimensional geographical structures, with a technical lexicon (geometry, etc) or with metaphors, reflexive comments on the narrative materials, metaphysical etiology providing historical events with a religious meaning, with causes and consequences. Writing is used as a way to establish the truth, to check the evidence, to exclude error and fantasy. The *Historiai* are one of the first documented use of writing in order to gather knowledge from various sources, oral, autoptic or written, to archive primary data, to provide the memory of recent events with a more reliable support than the human mind and hear-and-say.

The first medical treatises in the Hippocratic tradition gives another well-known example of the impact of writing onto the construction of knowledge, through the use of technical terms, through the archiving of observations and case-studies, through the discussion of various therapeutics, through the public staging of controversies between various healing techniques.

c) A specific pragmatics of the text itself.

A most striking feature of written literature is the dissociation between author and text through the latter's inscription on a material medium. A text may have an existence of its own, and does not necessarily need an author to circulate and to be transmitted. Writing implies its own pragmatic effects. First, texts can be copied and reproduced. They can circulate through more or less extended circles; they can be transmitted through the times. Oral texts, indeed, may also be reproduced, through human memory and recitation. But in such a transmission, texts do not exist independently from the recitants and the audience; they are linked with a performance. Reproducing texts through handwriting (and later through printing) implies that two, three or more copies of a text may have the same efficiency and power than the original one. Indeed, there might be a loss, for example between an autograph manuscript and its copy. But in such a case, the loss is linked with the medium, with the material support of the text, or with a specific value resulting from the owner of this support or from the scribe himself. A textual tradition relies on the assumption that one can appropriate a text while making a copy of it or acquiring a copy of it. I will not discuss here all the cultural restrictions ruling over such an appropriation, with social and political regulations preventing unauthorized persons to get access to a certain category of texts. According to cultural criteria or to the available techniques, the reproduction of texts may be literal or not. Unconscious changes and mistakes can occur although the scribe and the reader consider the copy as faithful. Literality may be a relative value. One could add: faithfulness in respect to which standard, to which norm? More precisely, to which model? Are two copies of a same text to be compared? Or is a copy to be compared with an original text?

According to the text's status, to its authority and to its intended uses, one could summarize it, paraphrase it, translate it, adapt it from poetry to prose or vice versa, or just excerpt words, sentences or longer quotations from it. Copyists select, cut, copy, paste, change, rewrite. Throughout such a sequence of operations, some features of the original text are saved, other are lost. But a part of the original text's efficiency is saved. It may be a specific wording, an idea, a factual information, words to be reused, a stylistic feature to be imitated.

Written texts may be read, silently or aloud, and may be heard. Readers or recitants can read a text from the beginning to the end, or stop and start again, slow down or quicken

up, repeat a given passage or omit another one, etc. Although human memory allows such ways of navigating across memorized texts, a written text makes these operations easier. Readers and recitants can also interpolate their comments in the read text, or read alternatively two texts, such as a literary work and its commentary, or two copies of the same text in order to check if they are identical. The handling of written texts open a wide spectrum of operations and of practices, such as textual criticism, teaching, hermeneutics.

Written texts cannot be considered only as the fixed version of oral texts. They have a power of their own. A text can teach, make believe, convey ethical guidelines or a wisdom, persuade, provoke various emotional feelings, inform. Sometimes, it creates representations in his reader's or listener's mind and shows him in a vivid way what is described (such is the power of *ekphrasis*, in Second Sophistic, shared by oral performances and by written texts). Indeed, any speaker knows how to create such effects and rhetoric is the art of the efficiency of discourse. An intellectual or spiritual teacher also has an authority of his own, and his oral discourse is the first medium of his knowledge and wisdom. But a philosophical text, a medical treatise, a historical narrative give to this knowledge and this wisdom a new dimension. Does a written text provide his readers with exactly the same meanings and effects as the oral discourse of its author, in a living frame of interaction? The loss, the difference or the full adequation are measured according to cultural criteria, within the different textual communities in a same society. According to their scope, to their institutional frame, to the kind of knowledge or wisdom they cultivate, the emphasis will be put on secrecy or on publicity, on esoterical or on exoterical knowledge, on debates and oral lessons or on a text encoding all the science of the group. The same cultural criteria define the degree of autonomy of texts: are they self-sufficient or not? Do they provide an external reader with exactly the same knowledge as any disciple of the teacher? Does a text need an additional and an oral commentary, in order to expand all its intellectual or spiritual content?

2. A WRITTEN TEXT IS NOT NECESSARILY A BOOK

In the second part of my paper, I would like to discuss the link between texts and books. In a previous step of my work, I was dealing with the following question: why, when, and

how did books become texts? I was interested in the change of focus occurring when readers become suspicious about what they read, about the books they are handling. Why do readers suspect books and why do some of them become aware that texts are not something given, but should be a construction?

Such broad questions were the starting points of an interdisciplinary and comparative research, where we focused on a particular step of textual and scriptural traditions: at this step, scholars become aware of the necessity to edit texts, to correct them, to organize them within a structured corpus, to build up their literality and their meaning, to control the way they will be transmitted. They also become aware that the editing, correcting, structuring choices of their forerunners could be re-considered, criticized, changed. Texts are considered as independent from books. This is when one observes an attempt to go beyond the material copies of a given text in order to put the emphasis on the text itself, that is on something to be constructed, to be discussed, to be dealt with in a collective frame... Alexandrian philology and its aristotelician precedents are for me a turning point, when the large amount of books gathered in the Museum's Library lead scholars to reflect on texts themselves. How to deal with the numerous textual variants books displayed? How could one reach Homer's *Iliad* beyond its many diverse copies?

The question I want to raise today is to some extent the opposite one: how did written texts become books?

I do not consider books only as a material support for texts. In Antiquity, before the development of the codex (either in papyrus or in parchment), the papyrus book roll was the only available medium for a long written text. Was any book-roll a book? But what is a book? According to our own contemporary standards, a book is the way a writer may bring a text to a wide and anonymous audience through a publishing process. This process has many components.

- Intellectual components: one has to decide that a text is completed, that the writing is over, that nothing can be added or changed and that the text can circulate as a self-sufficient entity;
- Technical components: a book is a text reproduced into x copies, through handwriting or mechanical means. Such a reproduction requires:

- Material components
- Social components: someone considers or presumes that it is worth to make this text available, to allow it to circulate and to reach a remote audience. Such a decision is taken by the writer and is sometimes inspired by the pressure of his friends, relatives, students or admirers.
- Legal components: the author, the printer and/or the publisher have to make sure that the text, through its circulation, keeps its title, its author's name, its length and inner divisions, its whole content and its literality; a copyright may protect this intellectual ownership.
- Commercial and economic components: the book is an object to be sold, bought or exchanged and its author will possibly get royalties from the sales.

Indeed, the features defining books in our contemporary world are the result of a long evolution. The printing press, in early modern Europe, was a crucial step, with the growth of specialized agents, such as printers and booksellers (sometimes the same persons handled the two tasks), with the development of a commercial market, with its networks and its centers (such as the Frankfurt book fair). It implied specific ways of advertising books and selling them.

The diffusion of written texts in the Ancient world was not controlled by such a publishing industry. It would be heavily anachronistic to consider that texts circulated in the Ancient world just as printed books began to circulate in early modern Europe.

My point is that many texts were indeed written in the Ancient world, but that they were not necessarily actual "books" in the modern sense. They were not intended to be "books", that is texts validated by a publishing process and made available to a wide readership through professional agents or corporations. Van Groningen's work on *ekdosis* opened new conceptual paths for scholarly investigation on the circulation of written texts in the ancient world. Although papyrus book-rolls were the only available medium until the first centuries AD, all the texts written on book-rolls were not written for the same purpose.

A key question is to understand when, why, and how written texts began to circulate in the Ancient Greek world. Shortly speaking, Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Aristophanes did not write books. Neither did Lysias, Isocrates, or Demosthenes. They were all involved in the writing of texts, but those texts were written for various reasons and goals. The text written by a playwright was meant to be played and sung on stage by actors and a choir. On the other hand, a *logographos* intended to write a speech that was fit for a specific case and a specific litigant. Why did Attic tragedies and comedies, why did Attic logographoi's texts come to be seen as worthy to be copied, owned and transmitted beyond the dramatic performances or the legal cases themselves ? The answer, as uncertain as it may be, probably lies in the objectivation of texts and in a different way to look at them: they were considered for their own sake, as worthy to be read or studied. According to the distance between text and performance. How did a desire to read Attic dramas grow up? What was the intended audience? How should we draw the line between the professional need of actors and choirmasters to rely on written plays, and the interest of a wider audience to own a copy of their favorite tragedy or comedy on the other hand? Ancient sources clearly show that playwrights were the first writers who seemed to have an interest in other successful playwrights' writings. Euripides, according to Athenaeus, is one of the landmarks in the history of Greek libraries.

Understanding what Euripides' library was intended for is clearly beyond reach. It is however relevant to notice that texts written for a theatrical performance were enjoyed and admired so much that they could be copied or read independently from that performance. This process involved a radical shift in status. Being originally scripts written with specific theatrical performances in mind, these plays eventually became texts that were read, studied and imitated by themselves.

Attic orators provide us with another example. Why do we inherit most of Attic orators speeches? Why did these speeches survive the context they were written for? Answering these questions is not easy. We may just suppose that there were readers, students, interested in reading these speeches for themselves, as authoritative patterns. Did these readers admire these speeches for their formal qualities or for the results they got in actual cases?

The circulation of these texts was obviously linked to the teaching of rhetoric. Some of the major orators, such as Antiphon or Isocrates, wrote speeches to be studied and imitated by their students. These were, so to say, *des cas d'école*, displaying general patterns of argumentation, for example in a murder's case. The growing reputation of these orators explains why their speeches circulated as written texts, were sold by booksellers. Any defense speech written by the defendant himself, following the *logograph's*' outline, or written by a second-rate orator, could interest a wide readership if it was attributed, let say, to Lysias or Isocrates. It was easier to sell a discourse by Lysias than by a totally unknown orator. Nobody controlled such an attribution. According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Aphareus, Isocrates' adopted son, affirmed that his father never wrote a single forensic speech. Aristotle replied that there were bundles of book-rolls for sale in Athens, supposed to be Isocrates' forensic speeches. The ancient history of the corpus of Attic orators, reconstructed by Kenneth Dover, offers a fascinating case study on the way oral speeches became books. The orators themselves were not the agents of this process. Nobody controlled the authenticity of texts in the Athenian bookshops and the orators themselves did not get any royalties for the sales. It was a centrifugal process, and uncontrolled copies were put for sale or given away, according to private initiatives or to commercial practices. It will be the task of Hellenistic librarians and critics to authenticate texts and to reject the fakes.

Any discussion on the status of books in the Ancient world should mention Galen's *De ordine librorum* treatise. This famous physician was reputed to be a prolific writer, and the extant corpus of his treatises and commentaries confirms his fame. But did Galen "publish" books to be sold and diffused anywhere? No, he wrote texts for the people surrounding him, for beginners and advanced students, for friends. I had no desire at all to circulate my texts beyond the circle of my familiar. I did not intend to write for the future generations. I did not write for the philosophers and the other physicians who, as a general rule, are not interested in the texts written by their colleagues. Knowledge is not transmitted through books and their indeterminate circulation, but through direct relationships, from a father to his son, from a teacher to his student, from a friend to his friends, from a famous figure to his close circle. As far as I am concerned, Galen says, I never intended to have my writings widely diffused. Actually, they did circulate against

my will. This is the reason, why, later, I was often reluctant to give a copy of my work to a friend.

There is perhaps a part of affectation in these statements. But they give us a fair picture of the way texts were written and used in scholarly milieus. They were intended for a limited circulation among friends and students. They were intended for an internal use. The written texts could be used for lessons and discussions, for debates and shared research. Galen allowed his own personal copies to be reproduced for people he knew personally. These friends or students were willing to own a copy of the texts for their private use, to read the texts for themselves. But once this process was initiated, it was difficult to control it and to impose limits upon it. Texts were reproduced in a centrifugal way and, at the end of the chain, they might be found in a Roman bookshop and eventually attributed to another author.

Giving a copy of a written text to a friend or allowing him to make a copy of it for his professional use is not publishing a book. Such an informal and direct transmission of texts relied on personal bonds between the writer and his reader. Its Greek name is *paradosis* , that is "giving the text to some one". Such a pattern defines many textual communities of the Ancient world, such as sectarian groups, philosophical schools, the Alexandrian Museum itself.

On the other hand, ancient writers have sometimes decided that their text was fully completed and that it could circulate on its own. They gave up any control or power upon it. They left their text go away — *ekdidonai, ekdidosis*. It is beyond the scope of this paper to comment upon these terms. I would like, however, to stress their legal connotations. They are referring to the act of renting an estate to a farmer; or of "giving" his daughter to her future husband; or of allowing his own son to be adopted by someone else. This is a way to give up his property rights, or his authority upon someone. When a writer decides to let his text go away, on its own, *ekdosis*, he accepts to make it public and to loose any control upon it. In such a process, the writer considers that his text is completed and that he has nothing to add or to change anymore. He also admits that his text may circulate on its own and reach its readers, whatever the paths it will follow. Publication was more an intellectual decision than a business matter. Before this step, a text was *anekdoton*, not for

circulation, as many papers discussed in this conference. The author could give a copy to a friend or allow him to copy the text. Sometimes, he could give his text to a bookseller who was in charge with the reproduction process. Cicero gave some of his texts to his friend Atticus. Atticus had a specialized staff of *librarii*, who made copies of the texts. Nothing could protect such an agreement or make it exclusive. Once a customer bought a book, he could make as many copies as he wanted and sell them or give them away. Once the author gave his text to a bookseller, he was unable to control its diffusion anymore, even he had to correct a major mistake. When Cicero became aware that he wrote "Eupolis" instead of "Aristophanes", it was too late: Atticus could not correct the copies already sold (ad Attic. XII, 6, 3). The text was a public book.

From Vth century Athens to Imperial Rome, one can follow the development of the book trade in the Ancient world. Buying and reading books in Classical Athens was not a widespread activity. Literati, as Euripides and Aristophanes, philosophers, such as Plato, are said to have bought books, sometimes in various places. Attic vases' painting testifies that holding a book-roll in his or her hand was not totally unfamiliar. But the use of written texts was restricted to school scenes or to intimate scenes, in the private sphere. Oral performances provided the main access to written literature. On the other hand, in Rome, from the Late Republic, one observes the development of private libraries and of the book trade between the Greek world and Italy. The situation has obviously changed. Readers, writers, booksellers, specialized scribes and librarians belong to a same community, where books became one of the main supports of knowledge and culture. It was the result of a long process of change and evolution, and I would like now to focus on the place where this process occurred.

3. **THE ROLE OF LIBRARIAN SCHOLARSHIP IN THE OBJECTIVATION OF BOOKS**

In the third part of my paper, I would like to emphasize the importance of Hellenistic libraries, especially the Alexandrian library, in the development of a bookish culture, and, more precisely, in the shift of focus from texts to books.

The foundation of the Museum as a leading cultural institution in the Bruchion area of Alexandria is a well-documented fact. Therefore I will not discuss the Peripatetician origins of the project, or the seminal role of Demetrius of Phaleron and Strato of Lampsacus, as counselors of Ptolemy Lagos. Neither will I lay stress on the previous tradition of court patronage, for example in Vth and IVth centuries Macedonia.

The Alexandrian library was not an independent building or an institution of its own, but was a part of the Museum: it was, so to say, a research tool for a community of scholars, as the peripatetic library already was in Athens. In the shift from Athens to Alexandria, however, the concept of a "research library" reached a new scale. It was also a palace and a state library, and as such, we may suppose that Oriental models inspired it, as the Assurbanipal's library in Babylon.

What makes the Alexandrian library unique is indeed its royal patronage and the unprecedented scale of its ambition. The ancient historiographical tradition dealing with the library, whose starting point is the *Letter to Aristeas*, lays great stress on the universal scope of the library's project: gathering all the books ever written in the oikouméné, in whatever language, not only by Greeks but also by other cultural traditions. Gathering all the books, in all the intellectual fields, in all the literary genres.

Myth and historical facts intertwine in these accounts, and Luciano Canfora analyzed their metamorphoses in the Western and Eastern traditions. A key point, however, is the assumption that books are a medium for *paideia*, for culture, and that collecting books and gathering them in the same storage place is a way to create a center of universal learning. In order to set up the supremacy of their newly founded dynasty, Lagid rulers did not rely on territorial extension. The dream of a universal Empire did not survive Alexander's death. Hellenistic kingdoms were delimited by unstable borders and wars intertwined with rivalries for a symbolic supremacy. The Alexandrian library was therefore a way to encompass universality in a delimited place and to extend the Lagids' influence far beyond the area they actually ruled over.

Alexandria, a kind of frontier city, at the threshold of Egypt, at the Oriental periphery of the Greek world, became the new center of the oikoumene through the transfer and the

accumulation of books in the same place. Either bought in various cities of the Greek world or confiscated from the travelers by the custom officials in the harbor, books were first and foremost material and valuable goods that one could buy , trade, accumulate and store. Buying as many books as possible, all books available, whatever text they offered, was the motto of the first Ptolemies.

The collection of book-rolls was considered as the best way to concentrate the *paideia* in a same place, but also to appropriate the Greek cultural and literary heritage through a material medium which made possible its delocalization and relocation. Books were the medium for relocating in Alexandria literary works, cultural traditions, and intellectual achievements that were rooted in the life of Greek cities. Lyrical poetry, epics, tragedy and comedy, political and forensic eloquence,

Festivals, social and religious events, banquets, political and legal institutions, or philosophical schools, set the frame for cultural and literary performances: poetry, epics, theatrical plays, eloquence, philosophical treatises. In these performances, orality, voice, music, rhetorical *actio*, intellectual debates were at the forefront, and texts were read aloud, heard, staged in ritualized contexts. The papyrus book-rolls provided the new Egyptian rulers with a way to gather all these traditions through written texts. The performances and their social context were lost and had to be reinvented in the new cosmopolitan city, which differed from classical city in so many respects — institutions, religion, social classes, citizenship itself. Thousands of book-rolls provided this "ville nouvelle" with an artificial memory, an hyperbolic memory, resulting from the juxtaposition, the mixing and synthesis of every local tradition coming from Ancient Greece. Through the books, Athens was so to say included, or rather encoded in Alexandria, as well as Marseille, Sinope, Byzantium, and so many other cities which the library's books came from.

According to Tzetzes, under the rule of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, the library's collection was composed of 490.000 book-rolls. 90.000 bibloi were "amigeîs, which means there was a single text on a single roll; 400.000 bibloi were "summigeis": we follow Luciano Canfora and we consider that these rolls were the different "volumes" composing a same text. For example, Ephorus' historical work was composed of 30 book-rolls. The ancient

tradition on the Alexandrian library emphasized the number of book-rolls, not the number of texts. The material support was used as a counting unit, not the works themselves. The 490.000 book-rolls also included different copies of a same text. The number of texts was obviously far lesser than the number of books.

The library was at the same time a storage-space for the book-rolls, either bought, offered or confiscated, and a scriptorium making possible the copy of texts on new book rolls. The Ptolemies' policy was to gather and to keep books coming from all the regions of the world. It seems copies of the Homeric epics may have been labeled with the name of the city they came from. The Ptolemies were not only interested in texts, they were interested in rare and valuable copies, in unique books, such as the so-called official copies of the Attic playwrights, which were borrowed from the city of Athens, but never given back, according to Galen. Obviously, the material book and its unique prestige mattered more for the Ptolemies than the text itself. Their emphasis on rare editions, on books coming from all the areas of the Mediterranean world was inspired by a genuine bibliophilic interest intertwined with political considerations. On the other hand, the library was also a place where scribes produced modern copies of the texts. We have no direct testimoniy about this organization and the staff involved in the copy process. But, thanks to Galen, we know there were scribes, in charge of the handwritten reproduction of all the books confiscated on the boats anchored in the Alexandria's harbor. Interestingly enough, the new copy was given to the owner of the book, while the original book-rolls, brought in Alexandria, were stored in the library. It is very likely that the book owners left Alexandria with brand new papyrus book-rolls, but with defective texts...

This scriptorium activity, however, was not limited to the producing, in a rush situation, of new copies to be exchanged with original book-rolls. It played a fundamental role for the holdings of the library itself. A library containing thousands of papyrus book-rolls so various in origin required regular and continuous back-up operations. Insects, mices, moisture were a pending threat. In order to save the texts, one had to copy them on new book rolls. Interestingly enough, as far as I know, we have no clue on the logistics of such a process: nothing about the factories producing the sheets of papyrus and the assembling of these sheets in book-rolls, and no evidence whatsoever on the organization of the scriptorium itself, its staff - probably slaves -, or the supervisors of the copying process.

The extant historiographical sources focus on the leading scholars in charge with the collection, such as Callimachus, Eratosthenes, Aristophanes of Byzantium, Aristarchus, and leave the scribes aside.

Egyptian literary papyri, however, clearly show that the Alexandrian library defined new standards for the copying of ancient texts. If the so-called Alexandrian philology was in charge with the *diorthôsis* of texts and the critical treatment of variants, gaps, inconsistencies and interpolations, Alexandrian books production defined new standards of length, layout and readability for the copying of texts. I follow here Jean Irigoin's comments on the characteristic features of book-rolls found in Hellenistic Egypt. Their format was fit for texts between 1000 and 2000 lines, which was the average length of Attic comedies and tragedies; it was also an appropriate medium for two, sometimes three shorter books of the Homeric epics. It was also the average length of most editions of poetic texts. For example Sappho's poetry is 1320 lines long (P.Oxy. 1231); Pindar's *Olympics* are 1562 lines long; Pythics are 1983 lines long. Hesiod's *Theogony* is 1020 lines long. Plato's Phaedo, on a IIId century BC, is written on a papyrus with a length of 9m50. Such standardized book-rolls strongly influenced Alexandrian writers, especially the literati who belonged to the Museum, and were involved in the library's activities: Lycophro's *Alexandra* is 1774 lines long; Aratus's *Phaenomena* and *Prognostica* are 1154 long; Callimachus' *Hymni* are 1083 lines long; Aitia III and IV were around 1000 lines. Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* are divided in four books whose length was between 1285 and 1781 lines, which means, once again, that length was determined by the format of the medium.

These new material norms consequently defined standards for the Hellenistic book-rolls in all the Mediterranean world, through the exportation of blank papyrus book-rolls. Herculaneum's papyri offer the same characteristics than their Egyptian counterparts, and the text layout was ruled by the same norms: the book rolls had an average height of 16 cm, the writing columns were 5 cms wide, each column was separated by a blank space from 1,2 to 2,5 cms wide.

The Alexandrian library is obviously the place where such norms were adopted and where scribes and scholars set standards for the papyrus book-rolls that were manufactured on an almost industrial scale in Egyptian factories.

Graphic and layout norms were also defined for the writing of texts. Once the book roll is totally unrolled, the reader reaches the end of the text: the author's name, the book title, the volume number, and sometimes the first line of the next were hints meant to make the book-roll identification possible, and help the reader find the next roll of a multi-volume edition. A few visual norms gave a minimalist structuration to the written text. Intervals and indentations, for example, were used to emphasize the shift from one metrical pattern to another in dramatic texts, a short horizontal stroke between two lines helped distinguish paragraphs or a verse quotation in a prose text, and an interlocutors' shift in a dramatic text.

All these characteristics have been analyzed by E.G. Turner, among others, and I will not deal extensively with them in this paper. My point is that material books were now the main medium of written texts. They could be reproduced, circulated, archived on a large scale. Reading (either silent or aloud) provided the literati with the most usual and direct access to ancient texts, instead of the poetical and theatrical performances in the Classical cities. The Alexandrian library opened the era of libraries, either court libraries, such as the Pergamon Library, temples libraries, such as the Serapeion library in Alexandria, gymnasia's libraries, or private libraries. These libraries varied by their scale, their focus, the uses they induced, their readers. They all belong to a new era, where books are considered as the only medium allowing to archive and to retrieve texts, making the integration of the cultural and literary heritage possible.

These libraries also paved the way for the development of bibliography, that is the art of handling books through bibliographical data. As far as we know, Callimachus' *Pinakes*, in 120 book-rolls, were not the catalogue of the Alexandrian library, at least in the modern sense of the word. Since the Alexandrian library was supposed to encompass all the text that were ever written, the *Pinakes* were a map of Greek *paideia*, of all the authors and their works. The 120 book-rolls of Callimachus were a condensed, portable library. Greek culture was organized as a map based on a division into literary and discursive genres:

rhetorika, *nomoi*, *epos*, historians, "various treatises" (*pantodapa suggrammata*). From this larger scale, it was possible to go down to the level of individual authors, which was organized by alphabetical order. Short biographical information could be provided. Authors names were used as the headings under which appeared the list of their works, sometimes arranged in different categories. For example, Pindar's poems were listed according to the collection they belonged to, such as Pythics, Olympics, etc. It seems other information could be added, such as the number of lines or the incipit of the text. These bibliographical data could also be followed by a discussion on the authenticity of the text itself.

The *Pinakes* played a major part in Hellenistic and Roman scholarship. They paved the way for other bibliographical achievements, such as the "Corrections and complements" by Aristophanes of Byzantium in Alexandria, or the *Anagraphai* of the Pergamon library. Such works allowed scholars, book-sellers and buyers, either in Alexandria, Rome, or Athens, to identify books, check the attribution and the authenticity of texts, check their length and the number of book-rolls composing them. The work of Alexandrian scholars defined the proper way to quote texts, handle books and collect them. It originated a whole specialized literature, such as handbooks intended to laymen willing to create and develop their own private library. Artemo of Cassandreia (perhaps a scholar from Pergamon, around 100 BC) wrote treatises on *The Collecting of books* and *On the Use of books*: the later was perhaps a subsection of the first. We also know the titles of other similar works: Herennius Philo wrote a treatise: *On the way to acquire and to choose books* (he was a contemporary of Hadrian). Telephos of Pergamon wrote a treatise *On the knowledge of books*, where he listed the &books worth to be bought. Demetrius of Magnesia, a scholar of the first c. BC, wrote a treatise *On homonymous poets and writers*: this was an obvious pitfall for ignorant book collectors and for experienced scholars as well.

But we know nothing more than the titles of these technical books. There are two exceptions. We can gather a little bit more informations on Artemo, thanks to Athenaeus and to Pindaric scholia. Demetrius of Magnesia, a friend of Atticus, was a major source for Diogenes Laertius, although he was criticized by Dionysius Halicarnassus.

Books are now at the forefront. They have become the main medium for the diffusion of culture. Libraries spread over the Mediterranean world: private libraries, public and imperial libraries in Rome, libraries in provincial cities, libraries in Greek gumnasia. Students, wealthy men, either educated or ignorant, scholars and teachers used books in order to get access to the literary and intellectual treasures of the past as well as to the most recent works. Libraries and bookshops became important meeting places, where cultivated friends were used to meet, to browse books and to discuss about them: Aulus Gellius, in his *Noctae Atticae*, is a valuable witness about the social habits of *literati* in imperial Rome.

We are fortunate enough to have an extensive testimony on a scholarly circle in Antonine Rome, Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists*: this circle will lead me to the concluding part of my paper, and I would like to summarize here my on-going research on this "banquet of sophists", which is today the object of a renewal of scholarly interest. Athenaeus stages a scholarly community of grammarians, rhetors, musicians, physicists and philosophers, gathered in the private house of a wealthy Roman knight, Larensis. The Greek *symposium* provides them with the frame of their interaction and with the topics to be discussed, from the *propoma*, to the *deipnon*, and then to the *symposium* at the proper sense of the word, to end up with a farewell libation. This banquet, however, is also a banquet of words. The dining room is surrounded by a library which, according to Athenaeus, was more important than all the most famous collections of books of the Greek tradition, those of Aristotle, of Alexandria and of Pergamon included. This is a library with a specialization: old Greek books.

All the characters involved in this XV volumes long dialog are bibliophile scholars, fond of sharing their last acquisitions and of discussing about books. Larensis' guests come to the banquet with their bags full of book-rolls. In their table talks, according to Charles Gulick, the ditor of the text in the Loeb collection, more than 800 authors and 2500 works are quoted. According to the Oxford Classical Dictionary, Athenaeus alludes to 1250 writers, gives the titles of more than 1000 theatrical plays and quotes 10.000 verses. Considering that many works could be composed of several book rolls, and that Larensis' library probably contained duplicate copies of the same texts, one could be close to the 62.000 book-rolls of Serenus Sammonicus' private library, a contemporary of Athenaeus.

When one lives in Rome at the very end of the IInd century BC, and when one is fond of ancient Greek culture, of its literature, of its intellectual traditions, the only way to revive this lost universe of language, of practices, or customs and of material objects is to explore books, the most famous but also the rarer ones. Quoting texts is a way to answer all the questions: "Who was the first to write about lemons?" "What were the different kinds of drinking cups the ancient used?", "What were the different kinds of bread, of water, of wine in classical Greek cities... ?" etc

Bibliographical scholarship is a crucial component in such a project of cultural archaeology. Thousands and thousands of quotations are displayed and exchanged, in tedious lexical lists or in lively dialogues. Each of them is authentified by a bibliographical tag: author's name, the literary genre he belongs to, and various biographical data to avoid confusion between homonymous writers, such as Plato the Comic or Plato the Philosopher; title of the book, alternative title if any, number of rolls composing it – a necessary information in order to check if one has a complete edition or not. While quoting a text, one should also mention if its authenticity is suspected, if there is a debate on it and what are the main arguments involved. Athenaeus' characters are expert bibliophiles, used to check various reference works, such as Callimachus' *Pinakes* or Pergamon's *Anagraphai*, in order to identify a rare edition or an unknown comedy, to check a title or to find an author's name. These bibliographical data are a required information in order to ensure that the quoted fragment can be used as a valid source, contributing to shed light on the language, thought and customs of ancient Greeks. Athenaeus' literati display the expertise of librarians in the way they handle books and textual materials.

One could consider that the scholarly milieu depicted by Athenaeus is totally ruled by the dominion of the written word, by the dominion of books. One could consider that the library is now the material and mental horizon *par excellence* for scholars involved in compilation, lexicography and antiquarian writing. And indeed, it is true to a certain extent. But at the same times, Athenaeus and his compulsive readers are not our colleagues. They are using books, but not as we do. Their library is a mental one, structured by memory. Most of the times, they quote texts from memory, not through the

rolling and unrolling of their papyrus book-rolls. They learnt fragments by heart and they are able to quote them, according to thematic or lexical triggers. Their shared library is actualized in an oral performance, in table talks that unfold a long hypertextual thread, crossing as many texts as possible. Performance of memory, performance of recitation and rhetorical *actio*, since they quote texts from so many different literary genres, such as Attic comedy, historiography, Epics, but also cookery books, monographs on vegetables and cakes, on greed and dietetics etc. These scholars talk about books, they speak as books. They are living libraries. Their memory is structured as a library. Their rhapsodical talks follow a thread from books to books.

At the same times, their oral performances are transcribed and archived in a written text, Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists*. They provide a compilator's text with a fictional set up. This fiction is at the forefront. In the background, there is a Greek scholar from Egypt, using his reading notes, his *eklogai* and *hupomnémata,* in order to organize an impressive collection of thousands of excerpts recontextualized in a dramatic and a narrative frame. Whatever the real library of Athenaeus was, he chose to create a portable library, organized according to his own curiosity and interests. Books were read, used, compiled, in order to compose a new book. The library allows a new kind of writing, where quoting is not a mere repetition, but also a creation, providing readers with an unexpected perspective upon the texts the all of them know and a few others they may never have heard about. We shoud meditate on this paradox: Larensis' library vanished as the Alexandrian library did. But the *Deipnosophists* were saved... We inherited the diary of an ancient reader traveling within a lost library and collecting all the curious words, strange facts and tasty bits of texts he could find.

Conclusion

In this paper, I tried to explore three aspects of the dominion of the written word in the ancient Greek world. First, the confidence in the written medium, as a way to fix human thought and language and to produce a specific knowledge, different from the knowledge in oral tradition. Second, the ways written texts circulate and are used in a society, with many different paths of diffusion and communities of reception: written texts are not necessarily books, they are sometimes linked to specific social frames, and they interact with orality. It

is only a slow process that frees texts from their writers and allows them to reach unexpected readers. The same slow process also explains why readers felt the need to own a copy of texts, to order a copy to a scribe or to copy it themselves, or to buy them at a bookshop. Last, I put the emphasis on Hellenistic libraries as a place where texts became books, that is material objects one had to handle, to organize, to copy, to count. Hellenistic bibliography was considered as a new intellectual discipline, allowing many abstract operations, such as the handling of books through the quotation of standardized bibliographical data. Athenaeus is one of the best examples of the efficiency of ancient libraries as an intellectual space. Thousand of textual fragments can circulate, be reorganized and recontextualized. Their bibliographical tag is like an ID, and allows Athenaeus' characters as well as his modern readers to follow infinite lexical and thematic threads through the web of Greek literature without ever loosing the whole structure of the division of genres and fields, or the organization of corpus and single works, of the authorship and of the datations of texts.

I should however make clear that I do not conceive these three forms as three steps in a genetical process which would lead from an oral culture to a bookish culture. I rather think that they can coexist at the same time and that the balance between them changes according to periods, to literary and intellectual genres, to social milieus. Orality, written texts, books are not the three peaks of a triangular polarity, but they define rather a continuum where different kinds of balance may be reached or challenged through history.

My paper was an attempt to set some programmatic guidelines for a large-scale reflection on the intellectual uses of written texts in the ancient Greek world. I am convinced that such an investigation should be conceived on a comparative level, both within and outside the Greek experience. One should of course distinguish various intellectual traditions, such as philosophers, physicists, scientists, rhetoricians and grammarians, librarians, antiquarians, commentators, lexicographers. These different categories could be themselves divided along new lines, either intellectual trends (e.g. Hellenistic philosophical schools), or chronological areas (Hippocratic medicine, Hellenistic medicine, Imperial medicine), or religious beliefs (pagan, Jewish, Christian religions). These intellectual milieus or micro-milieus can be defined though the way they used written texts, through the kind of authority they provided them with, through the autonomy they gave them.

Between the autonomous objects accumulated on the shelves of Hellenistic libraries and the subordination of written texts to the voice which makes sense of them, there are many intermediary degrees that define specific textual communities.

A broader comparative frame, involving Mesopotamian, Jewish, Christian, Greek and Roman traditions, is an obvious way to change the usual light we shed on the texts of our own libraries. Reading them from elsewhere is the best way to understand their status, their meaning, and their intended and sometimes unexpected effects.